



DIRECTORATE OF  
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## DOMESTIC COLLECTION DIVISION Foreign Intelligence Information Report

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REPORT CLASS: [REDACTED] REPORT NO. [REDACTED]  
COUNTRY USSR DATE DISTR. 15 November 1982  
SUBJECT Soviet Prison Labor Practices (DOI: 1971-1982)

### REFERENCES

### SOURCE

SUMMARY: The Siberian gasoline project, as any other important construction project, has used and will continue to use prison labor. The penal system was designed purposefully to get prisoners out of jails and into the labor force as soon as possible. Parole periods for most prisoners constituted at least 70 percent of the total sentence and provided maximum mobility and availability for construction work in all parts of the economy. Paroled prisoners typically were housed at construction sites in easily-identifiable, transportable structures.  
END SUMMARY.

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Approved for Release  
Date MAR 1997

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1. [REDACTED] Comment: The source has no direct knowledge of pipeline or compressor station construction projects but he insists that his first-hand knowledge of the Soviet penal system qualifies him to state with assurance that such projects are using, and will use, prison labor to whatever extent Soviet authorities deem necessary. The source emphasized that Soviet prisoners have been used for construction project work since the inception of the Soviet state and that prison labor represents an important, constant resource for the Soviet economy.)

2. The Soviet adage "he who doesn't work doesn't eat" is as applicable to Soviet prisoners as it was to the general population. The penal system is purposely designed to get prisoners out of jails and into camps and onto useful work projects as quickly as possible. A prisoner sat idly in jail only during the first two stages of his judicial processing: the investigation and the trial itself (including the appeal for those who bothered to exercise it). As soon as the sentence was confirmed the prisoner immediately is sent to a camp. These camps were in the mid 1970s surrounded by fences and maintained typical prison security. Most (all?) camps had their own light manufacturing facilities which contributed significantly to the availability of consumer goods. Household items and simple furniture, kitchen cabinetry, etc., were typical products which prisoners manufactured within the camp.

3. Prisoners in camps also were used routinely on major construction projects of all kinds, including dams, buildings (especially factories), highways, railroads, pipelines, timber cutting and hauling, and many others. The only restriction on the use of camp inmates in such projects was the requirement that they be returned to camp, in guarded trucks, at the end of each work day. Thus the use of such labor was limited by the distance between the camp and the project.

4. The final stage in the life of the typical prisoner is his parole period which freed him for maximum use in the labor force. Again, this part of the system is deliberately designed to get maximum use out of each prisoner: parole periods constituted at least 70 percent of the total sentence.

| <u>Length of Sentence</u> | <u>Period of Parole</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| (years)                   |                         |

5

4

7

5

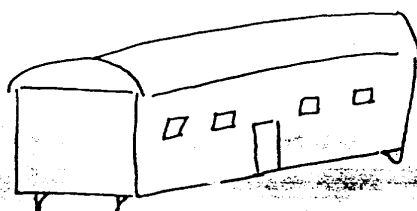
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5. Parolled prisoners were assigned to construction projects wherever they were needed and stayed at the project as long as necessary. They were housed in transportable structures which were somewhat like typical western mobile homes or construction shacks, except that at the conclusion of the project they were not trailered to another site but were hauled on flatbed trucks. Each structure (budka) housed 12 men and measured approximately 8.4 by 2.2 meters. (Field Comment: Approximately 200 of these structures were grouped at the construction site of the Lozovaya Tractor Plant during its construction in 1973.)



rounded black roof

four windows on  
each side, entrance  
door one side only,  
no windows at ends;  
electric heating, no  
chimneys; painted  
blue or dark green.

Typical Prison Labor Housing  
(for 12 men)

Security for these parolled prisoners was light: there was an evening curfew and bedcheck which was supervised by the work brigade leader but prisoners were allowed to visit with family members who occasionally moved to the area of the construction project in order to be with husband/father.

6. [REDACTED] Comment: The source noted that counting these standard construction site housing structures would not provide an accurate tally of prison labor because military construction troops frequently, but not always, were used at the same projects. When present, they were housed in the same kind

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[REDACTED]

of transportable structures. However, troops were always located separately from the prison labor housing. Civilian workers (non-prisoners) rarely, if ever, were housed in these structures.)

7. The fact that at least 70 percent of each prisoner's sentence was in a parole status is believed to have some significance for the Soviet economy because of the augmentation thus provided the labor force in major construction work. Another economic factor of significance is the wage scale for prisoners and non-prisoners: it was typical that parolled prison labor received one-third the wage of non-prison workers for the same work. Prisoners who had not yet been parolled and who were returned to camps each night received no wage for their work but did receive a small stipend from the camp.

8. [REDACTED] Comment: The source had no personal experience with political prisoners but it seemed unlikely to him that they would have been ineligible for parole; such a rule would have deprived the state of additional manpower. He agreed, however, that if the total number of political prisoners was an insignificant proportion of all prisoners -- not necessarily true -- then a no-parole rule might have made sense. He had never heard estimates of the total prison population in the Soviet Union but guessed that it had to be at least in the hundreds of thousands.)

9. The determination of assignments of camp populations (both parolled and non-parolled) to construction projects appeared to depend to some extent on the personal clout of various project managers. Camp officials frequently were badgered by several authorities, simultaneously, each vying with the other for the available labor. Disputes of this kind were settled "somewhere from above" but it seemed clear that any ministry or lesser entity could use camp labor and that it was by no means limited to only a few, high-powered organizations. Thus there could be no question that the Siberian gasline, as any other important large project, would utilize prison labor in its construction. To do otherwise would have been completely at odds with the system.

[REDACTED]

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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